

Albert Gallatin Jenkins: 3

Capt. Jenkins Prospered in New Home, Instilled Own Zeal in His Children

By CONGRESSIONAL KEN HECHELER

(Hecheeler's "Notes" have been used in a series of articles on the life of Maryland-born statesman Albert Gallatin Jenkins. Readers are invited to supply additional material for eventual inclusion in a biographical volume on General Jenkins.)

Not long ago, I rang the doorbell of a modest, well-kept suburban home in Bethesda, Maryland, and the door was answered by an 88-year-old retired dentist named Dr. George Robert Jenkins.

Still vigorous for his age, Dr. Jenkins invited me in for what proved to be an exciting evening. He recalled with clarity his early years at the old Greenbottom plantation of the Jenkins family. Dr. Jenkins's father, Thomas Jefferson Jenkins, was a brother of Civil War hero Albert Gallatin Jenkins.

Dr. Jenkins proudly displayed a colored painting of the old homestead at Greenbottom where Albert Gallatin Jenkins, his uncle, grew up. It is a substantial house, with heavy stone foundations, so soundly constructed in 1835 that it still stands essentially the same today. Albert's father, Captain William Jenkins, was never a man for half-way effort. From the clay soil of the fields in Greenbottom, he had bricks baked for the walls. Negro slaves helped to hew timbers from the Ohio River Valley forests, and to drag them to the construction site. Wooden pegs joined the heavy timbers. According to Dr. Roy Bird Cook, eminent Civil War historian, "The best that existed in architecture in that day was brought into use. The doorways were headed by beautiful fan-shaped windows, stairways were hand-carved, and all the woodwork shows evidence of wonderful taste in architecture."

House Faced River

Three dormers regally topped the Jenkins mansion, which faced the Ohio River with its back to the present Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and river road. Down to the river from the palatial front door was a vista lined with poplars. Ample lawns stretched in all directions, well-tended by the slaves who lived in several other small buildings on the property. Of course there was a smokehouse, too, for what plantation would be complete without a good-sized smokehouse?

The main house was constructed of very distinctive red brick, overgrown with clinging vines, and surrounded by shrubbery. (The red brick has since been painted white, and the vines, shrubbery and other buildings have long since been torn down or swept away by floods. An extension used for a kitchen was flooded out in 1913, and a rather poor substitute added in its stead. A brick office building used by General Jenkins also has disappeared.)

Captain William Jenkins completed the mansion when his youngest son Albert Gallatin was five years old in 1835. He also built homes for his other two sons, Thomas Jefferson, and William Alexander, southwest of the original homestead where Albert Gallatin Jenkins was raised. Fire destroyed the Thomas Jefferson Jenkins home some 40 years ago, and its ruined hulk stands on the banks of the Ohio River, midway between the William A. Jenkins and the Albert Gallatin Jenkins mansions.

At the end of Lunsford Lane, the southernmost of the three

Jenkins structures—once occupied by William A. Jenkins—still stands. It is a massive red brick building, very solidly constructed like the other Jenkins mansions. One hot afternoon several weeks ago I peered the attic of this old house, hoping to find some scraps of paper relating to its original occupants, but it has been cleaned out. The brick structure, located much closer to the Ohio River than the Albert Gallatin Jenkins home to the northeast, is unoccupied but on the property of Mr. and Mrs. William Gustin who live in a frame house close by. A magnificent lawn still stretches to the river bank as of old.

Captain William Jenkins, nearing 80 years of age when he settled down at the Greenbottom Homestead, was a restlessly drawn by the lure of the water. At first content with building his home and raising his daughter and the three sons who were born at Greenbottom, the energies of the sea Captain drove him into new enterprises. While the building was going on at Greenbottom, Captain Jenkins started to cultivate the rich Ohio River bottomlands. It was an easy step from crops to livestock, and herds of cattle were supplemented by hogs and more hogs. When there were too many for the local market, Captain Jenkins started shipping hogs down-river to Cincinnati, a great pork market.

One of the best pen portraits of the doughty Captain Jenkins was written by his granddaughter, Mrs. Isabella Jenkins Waugh Woods. Mrs. Woods, mother of J. P. Woods of Huntington, was herself the daughter of Mrs. Eustasia Jenkins Waugh—the three-week-old infant daughter whom Captain Jenkins brought with him when he came to Cabell County in his wagon trip over the Allegheny Mountains in 1835. Mrs. Woods wrote from Pedlar Mills, Va., March 11, 1915, this about her grandfather, Captain Jenkins:

"After our grandfather located in Cabell County, he amassed quite a fortune, and a large number of Negroes, and the same spirit of enterprise was exhibited by the fact that he chartered a steamboat, loaded with produce and livestock, cattle, hogs, etc., boated down the Mississippi to New Orleans for market. My mother accompanied him on one of these trips, when his sales amounted to twenty thousand dollars. Many facts of family lore were told me by her."

Restless Enterprise

This is the kind of family in which young Albert Gallatin Jenkins grew up—characterized by restless enterprise, making no little plans, building, planting, harvesting, with no limit to the amount of energy and ingenuity displayed. Born to the purple, young Albert suffered none of the handicaps sometimes associated with youngsters whose parents can afford anything and everything. Captain William Jenkins, a master entrepreneur, proved to be an even greater master in successfully raising a family. He instilled in Albert his own zeal for accomplishment. With a single-mindedness of purpose which achieved superior results, Captain William Jenkins concentrated on giving his children the best education then available.

"The best", in those days as today, was available at a small school near the town of Guyandotte. The name of the school was "Marshall."

(To be Continued)